



# **New Internationalist**

The people, the ideas, the action in the fight for global justice

# **What is courage?**

**New Internationalist Easier English**

**Ready Intermediate Lesson**

## **This lesson:**

- **Speaking – what is courage?**
- **Vocabulary – gap-fill**
- **Reading - jigsaw**
- **Speaking – retell and discuss**
- **Grammar – I wonder ...**



In small groups:



Look at the photos on the next 4 slides and discuss:

- **What are the people doing? Why?**
- **What is courage?**

# What is happening? What is courage?





**What is she doing? What is courage?**



**What is happening here?**  
**What is courage?**







**What is  
happening?  
What is  
courage?**





**Courage to - fight dragons**

- stand up to the authorities**
- face murderers**
- protect the public**
- continue fighting for justice**
- protect the environment**





**How many of these words / phrases  
do you know? – explain to each other  
and look up in dictionaries:**

- **to roar**
- **to defeat**
- **whistleblower**
- **death threat**
- **freedom of expression**
- **individualistic**
- **humanitarian work**
- **paramedic**
- **compassion**
- **minority**

# Fill the gaps:

- 1/ to roar
- 2/ to defeat
- 3/ whistleblower
- 4/ death threat
- 5/ freedom of expression
- 6/ individualistic
- 7/ humanitarian work
- 8/ paramedic
- 9/ compassion
- 10/ minority

- a) There is a lot of abuse against ..... groups in some countries.
- b) She won an award for her .....
- c) They wanted to win - ..... all the others.
- d) After the crash, the ..... was the first to arrive to help.
- e) She received a ..... because she was against the government.
- f) The lion began ..... when the keeper took away its food.
- g) She is well known for her great .....
- h) You can't be ..... if you are in a sports team.
- i) The ..... lost his job.
- j) She moved to another country because there was no .....

# Jigsaw reading

1/ Each group will have a different text: a, b, c or d.

Read your text to find:

i/ examples of courage

ii/ information about what courage is



2/ Mix up the groups so there is at least one from each of a, b, c and d.

Tell each other your examples and information about courage.



# a) Everyone loves stories of courage

In all cultures, traditions and times we have stories of courage: the shepherd-boy David against giant Goliath, Gilgamesh defeating the monster Humbaba, and Harry Potter and friends against Lord Voldemort. The passengers on a French train in 2015, who took the gun from the terrorist and saved many lives.

Ingrid Loyau Kennett in May 2013, who was on the bus in London when she saw someone killing a young soldier, Lee Rigby. Ingrid jumped off the bus and tried to save Rigby's life – but she couldn't. She talked to the two attackers (who had guns and knives) for 12 long minutes – until help came. She later said she wanted to keep the attackers busy so that they would not attack more people. When help came, she got back on a bus and continued her journey. She did not think she was a hero – she was just doing her job 'as a human being'. So what is courage?

Aristotle said courage is the greatest quality of the mind.

Richard Avramenko (teacher of political science at the University of Wisconsin) says courage is the most important way that humans can rise above their 'individualistic, isolated and materialistic existence'.

Physical bravery gets more attention and wins more awards. But there are many types of courage – moral, intellectual, emotional, psychological, political, social, spiritual, financial... You have to have courage to say something that most people don't agree with.

## b) The science of courage

Often we say that brave people have no fear. But courage isn't not being afraid. Nelson Mandela said that he learned that the brave are not people who have no fear, but people who overcome fear.

If there is no fear, there is no need for courage.

If we say we are afraid, this can make us feel small. But often the first step to being brave is to feel fear – then do the thing we are afraid of anyway.

Some people who feel no fear at the time they do something heroic can feel the fear afterwards. This happened to Loyau Kennett, who became depressed in the months after the event.

There is a rare medical condition called Urbach Wiethe disease that damages the part of the brain that processes fear – and people who have this may not be afraid of anything.

Sometimes people seem calm and practical because of their training. Firefighters, airline staff, paramedics and soldiers have trained for dangerous, unexpected situations. Scientists have studied the hormones the body produces in times of stress, and the areas of the brain that are active when people are doing something brave.

**Passion and compassion:** Many people say courage is more emotional. The Japanese actor, Midori Komatsu says: 'Passion should always be the heart of courage.' And compassion too. Many very brave people talk about compassion, as well as passion.

Tatiana Vivienne faces violence every day in the Central African Republic to reach the most vulnerable girls and women; Alicia Cawiya, in Ecuador, defends her people and their environment from the oil companies; people keep trying to kill Jlo Córdoba in Honduras, but she continues to fight for punishment for people who murder and abuse transgender people, because she 'loves' her community.

The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu says that you get strength when people love you, but when you love deeply, you become brave: 'From caring comes courage.'

Like Abdullah Al Khateeb, who will not stop his humanitarian work with refugees, even when he is a target for both sides in the Syrian conflict. 'When you care about people, your responsibility is total,' he says.

# c) Stand up for what is right

Brave people often know why they are doing something.

Environmental activist S Mugilan, pays no attention to death threats. He fights against powerful businesses who are destroying the state of Tamil Nadu. He says he has courage because he is 'the kind of person who is determined to change how things work'.

Today, some of the bravest people in the world defend human rights. 'There are not many human rights activists in Saudi Arabia now are,' said Lynn Maalouf of Amnesty International. They are disappearing – into prison, into silence or to other countries because the authorities do not allow freedom of expression.

Whistleblowers, like Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden suffer. Often they lose their jobs and their friends, relationships, homes and freedom. It is very important to support what they do.

**5 minutes longer:** 'A hero is no braver than an ordinary man,' wrote poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'but he is braver five minutes longer.'

For example, Eren Keskin (Turkish lawyer and former newspaper editor) has been in courts more than 100 times for her criticisms of the government, often for how it treats the Kurdish minority. She has been to prison many times. After the failed military coup in Turkey in July 2016, her passport was cancelled. She is in court again now.

Mary Anne Radmacher (artist and writer) says: 'Courage does not always roar. Sometimes courage is like the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow.'



## **d) Good courage, bad courage?**

Scientific studies of courage are interesting – one Israeli study puts people into an MRI tunnel, then shows them snakes! – but they are worrying.

It would be bad if this research helped develop a ‘courage pill’ to make soldiers ‘perfect’ fighters with no fear.

Fear can stop us doing what we need to do. But it can also make us think. We have to get through it when we need to. It is necessary for making change happen, in the individual and in the world.

Bravery is not always good. It can be violent, part of the military, fighting for male or tribal control.

One common theme in all the stories about bravery is caring and working closely with other people.

This courage is what makes healthy people and healthy societies work. It creates real change.

It inspires and pushes the human spirit to build a better world.

# Grammar: 'I wonder ....'

Look at the photos again and write a sentence for each, beginning: 'I wonder ....'

Then share and discuss.

Examples:

I wonder **why** she was so brave.

I wonder **if** she was afraid.

I wonder **what** she'll do next.

I wonder **how** he did that.



# Homework: reading and thinking

**Read more articles about courage and bravery (in Easier English first, then click on the original at the bottom and read that):**

- [https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Issue\\_500](https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Issue_500)

**And think:**

- Can you be more brave?
- If so, how? why?

